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ABSTRACT

Because the teacher librarian has an important educational role to play in assisting students to become independent learners by applying the inquiry process to library research, this booklet has been designed to assist teacher librarians in teaching students the information skills appropriate to stage three of the inquiry process, i.e., analyzing and selecting or rejecting information. A section on reading skills defines five skills necessary for students to deal effectively with information from a variety of sources and presents strategies to enable them to identify keywords, determine the main idea in a paragraph, question while reading to establish a clear purpose for reading, and learn skimming and scanning techniques to determine what to read or what not to read. In addition, strategies are presented for the application of the reading skills at three levels: surveying the resource to determine if it is suitable; surveying the information within the resource to determine whether it is appropriate to the student's purpose and reading level; and reading the previously defined relevant sections in detail to identify the main idea and supporting details as a prelude to taking notes. (KM)

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ANALYSE and SELECT/REJECT INFORMATION

READING STRATEGIES

BOOKLET 3 IN **INQUIRY PROCESS** *SERIES*

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The compilers wish to acknowledge the contributions of previous Library Services Advisers to the development of this booklet.

Library Services Branch
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INTRODUCTION

The teacher librarian has an important educational role to play in assisting students to become independent learners by applying the inquiry process to library research. This booklet has been designed to assist teacher librarians in teaching students the information skills appropriate to stage three of the inquiry process.

INQUIRY PROCESS

1. Identify and define the topic.
2. Locate resources.
3. **Analyse and select/reject information.**

   Students should be taught the reading skills and techniques to deal effectively with information from a variety of resources as part of this process.

4. Record information.
5. Process information.
6. Apply information.
7. Demonstrate understanding.
8. Evaluate.

OVERVIEW

Prior to research the language of the topic must be explored with students as poor reading comprehension is often caused by lack of familiarity with the subject matter. Explosion charts and concept maps assist students to develop subject-specific vocabulary and questions for active reading.

Question setting is a skill which must be developed so that students establish a clear purpose for their reading. It is also important that students are able to determine the main idea in a paragraph and identify the keywords which express the significant ideas in the text. The above skills are essential to the reading techniques of skimming and scanning, which enable students to determine what to read or what not to read.

Stage 3 of The Inquiry Process - Analyze and Select or Reject Information - depends on a clear mastery of these skills. The selection or rejection of information may occur at a number of levels. The initial survey of the resource is concerned with identifying whether the resource is suitable. This involves using both skimming and scanning techniques to check the contents, index, date of publication, chapter headings and introduction. The purpose of the parts of the book must be understood.

Surveying of the information within the resource is necessary to determine whether the information is appropriate to the student's purpose. This involves skimming through the introduction and conclusion of a chapter, and examining headings, sub-headings, diagrams, tables and illustrations. Scanning techniques are also used to locate specific information to answer the focus questions. Students must also develop strategies to determine whether the material is appropriate to their reading level.

Finally, students should be able to read the previously identified relevant sections in greater detail. This is a prelude to notemaking and requires students to identify accurately the main idea and the supporting details.

Care should be taken to ensure that all activities are in the context of the student's curriculum requirements. Students should be provided with opportunities to practise the individual skills involved in the selection and rejection of materials. These skills should be reinforced and practised constantly.

KEYWORDS

- *Keywords and phrases express the significant ideas in the text.*
- *Keywords are usually nouns and verbs (naming and action words).*
- *Keywords are often mentioned in titles, headings, contents and index pages.*
- *Identification of keywords and phrases is an essential pre-requisite for note making.*

STRATEGIES - KEYWORDS

Visual Stimulus

(a) Present a picture for students to discuss.

(b) After discussion students write down one word related to the picture.

(c) Students write their keyword in a sentence which relates to the discussion and the picture.

As students become familiar with keyword identification the number of words can be increased and sentences developed into a paragraph or summary.

Note: Although using a visual stimulus to develop the keyword concept is commonly associated with primary students, many secondary students also have problems in identifying keywords and the above activity is also appropriate for them.

The Index - a list of keywords

The student:

(a) Selects a book on the topic being discussed and locates the index at the back of the book.

(b) Chooses a keyword from the index on the topic that appears interesting.

(c) Finds the keyword on the page nominated and reads the page to gain information.

(d) Writes a sentence about the keyword.

Classified Advertisements - Essential Details

The student:

(a) Identifies an item that would be suitable for sale from the student's belongings - eg a skateboard, bike or dog.

(b) The student writes a description of the item and personal details needed for a buyer to contact the owner.

(c) Using examples of classified advertisements from a variety of newspapers - eg Sunday Times, West Australian, Western Mail, the student reads several advertisements. Ask what kinds of words are used - keywords.

(d) Explain the cost structures of classified advertisements (eg Western Mail was free, now $1 per line - how many words to a line?). Importance of essential details.

(e) The student writes a classified advertisement from the description of the item identified for sale.

Keywords Only Exercise

Using a selected extract, blank out non-keywords so that only keywords appear.

Illustrate to students the amount of information they gain through keywords by getting them to answer questions. An overhead of the deleted non-keywords shows students the number of unnecessary words.

MAIN IDEA

- *The main idea is the 'big idea' that contains the facts and is usually the most general statement in a paragraph.*
- *Concept of the main idea is similar to a category label for a list of words.*
- *The topic sentence contains the main idea. It is usually at the beginning or the end of a paragraph but this is not always the case. Not all paragraphs have a topic sentence.*
- *In some paragraphs the main idea may be implied or inferred.*
- *Sub-headings state the main idea.*

STRATEGIES - MAIN IDEA

- Students to read a paragraph. From a list prepared by the teacher, the students pick the statement which best expresses the main idea.
- Scramble sentences in paragraph. Students to place sentences in order with the topic sentence first.
- Students to express the main idea in their own words.
- Students to provide their own sub-headings for paragraphs.
- Students to provide a title for the whole passage.
- Students to provide captions for illustrations, diagrams, or cartoons.
- Students to predict the main idea from illustrations before reading the passage.
- Skim newspaper articles to find the main idea. Discuss the use of headlines in relation to the main idea.
- Have students ask the question/s:

  "What do all the sentences have in common?"

  or "How do all the facts relate to one another?"

QUESTIONING WHILE READING

Question setting is a skill which enables students to establish a clear purpose for reading. Questions may be teacher directed or developed by the student.

STRATEGIES

QUESTIONING WHILE READING

Students should:

1. Identify the keywords in the question or look at the first main heading or title.
2. Develop focus questions by using 'who', 'what', 'why', 'where', 'when', or 'how'.
3. Write the question/s down.
4. Select relevant material by skimming and scanning.
5. Read the material in detail to find the answers to the question/s.
6. Write the answers using keywords and phrases.
7. Question, read, write for each paragraph or selected passage.
8. Review the reading process:
   - were the questions answered?
   - recall important ideas.
   - skim through the material again.
9. Organize the new knowledge for specific purposes.

SKIMMING

- *Skimming is a reading technique which involves rapidly glancing through material to gain a general impression of the content of a selection.*
- *Students need to have a clear purpose when skimming the selection.*
- *Set a time limit (less than 5 minutes, depending on the material) for students to grasp the material as a whole.*

STRATEGIES - SKIMMING

Students are directed to:

1. Study the title to see what information can be gained from it.
2. Read the first paragraph to establish the author's approach to the topic.
3. Run their finger or move their eyes down the middle of each page, searching the lines of print quickly and letting their mind register keywords and impressions.
4. Watch for sub-headings.
5. Pick out the topic sentence in each paragraph. (This is often the first sentence in the paragraph).
6. Read the concluding paragraph.
7. Look at pictures and diagrams.
8. Collect their thoughts and decide whether their purpose has been satisfied. If not, repeat the process.

Note:

Teachers should work with students until they have mastered the technique and are observed to be using it to complete assignments. Skimming is not appropriate for certain kinds of materials (eg a poem, maths book or when close instructions need to be followed, ie recipe books).

SCANNING

Scanning involves glancing through material for a specific purpose. Students will need opportunities to practise the scanning technique to develop their ability to find specific information.

STRATEGIES - SCANNING

- To begin, students will need clear directions on what information is required.
- Students can be introduced to the scanning technique by requesting them to locate information in:
  - contents pages
  - indexes
  - telephone directories
- Set a time limit (2-3 minutes) to locate the information.
- Instruct the students to let their eyes move quickly across and down the page.
- Encourage the students to use their index finger to run down the page looking for keywords.
- Emphasize the importance of searching for keywords (names, dates, numbers).
- Encourage the students to check keywords by reading the information around them.

Having practised scanning on relatively simple lists of information students should be encouraged to scan more extensive material to find specific information.

- Scan material previously read to find information to support a particular comment.
- Scan material to find the answer to a specific question.
- Scan through several books to find specific information for research.
- Scan a dictionary for a specific word.

SURVEY THE RESOURCE

Students need to learn to vary their reading rate according to their purpose for reading, and the type and difficulty of the reading material. Surveying is a quick reading method used to gain an overview of the material in order to select material suited to their purpose and discard what is not wanted.

TO SURVEY RESOURCES STUDENTS NEED TO:

- *have a clear purpose for reading,*
- *check title, subtitle, blurb, author,*
- *read preface and/or foreward,*
- *note date of publication, publisher and of publication,*
- *scan table of contents for reference to chosen topic,*
- *note sequence,*
- *skim likely chapters, noting:*
  - *(a) aids: introduction, headings, sub-headings, summaries/conclusions, glossaries.*
  - *(b) pictorial Aids: Printing style, pictures, maps, tables, graphs.*
- *scan index for specific reference to the topic, noting extended references, illustrations, cross-references and sub-topics,*
- *locate referenced pages, scan to locate relevant information,*
- *read a paragraph to assess suitability of style and readability,*
- *review the surveyed information and decide whether or not to use the resource.*

STRATEGIES

SURVEY THE RESOURCE

Parts of a book

To survey effectively, students must be familiar with and understand the purpose of all parts of a book.

1. (a) Students work in groups with one book on the current topic per student.

   (b) Students examine each book in turn to find information to answer their research question.

   (c) On a sheet of paper for each book, the students write the author, title, publisher, date and place of publication.

   (d) After examining each book, and locating the various parts, the parts and the page numbers are listed under the bibliographic details.

   (e) Groups discuss each book in turn, noting the absence of a glossary, preface, etc. in some books.

   Note:

   Teacher would need to list parts to be examined and structure this activity to suit the lesson objectives. If each student examined only one book and shared findings with the group, the activiity would be much shorter.

2. (a) Photocopy several contents or index pages with information on the current topic.

   (b) Formulate three or four questions to allow comparisons and to emphasize the characteristics and arrangement of each.

   (c) Students scan to find answers.

3. (a) Students are given a copy of the same text or article on the research topic.

   (b) Students make their own index for the text by identifying main ideas and keywords.

   (c) The class discusses and compares indexes.

Prediction based on surveying

1. (a) Prepare ten questions to ascertain how well the students have surveyed a resource. The questions should reflect pertinent teaching points -

   e.g.
   - Does the index indicate which pages have illustrations?
   - Is your topic listed in the contents?
   - Does the text have sub-headings?
   - Was the book published after 1984? etc.

   (b) Students are given two minutes to survey a book on the research topic.

   (c) The ten questions are answered without referring to the book.

   (d) Students refer back to the resource to check answers.

2. (a) Students are given a resource on the topic and a sheet of paper ruled in half, lengthwise.

   (b) They survey the resource to decide its suitability for the topic.

   (c) On the right hand side of paper, parts of the resource examined are listed and, on the left hand side, the information gained from each part.

   (d) Using the above information, students write a sentence describing why the resource was selected or rejected.

3. (a) Students work in groups, with one book per student on the current topic.

   (b) Students are given four minutes to survey two books from the table and choose the one they consider would be most useful to them.

   (c) Each student explains to the group why they made their choice.

   (d) It does not matter if the same resource is chosen by two students, as their reasons for making the choice may be different.

4. (a) Students each use a copy of the class text for the current topic. Decide which part of the book is the teaching point for the lesson.

(b) Formulate questions to emphasize the teaching points.

Index

Questions which require students to:

- o find subject directly
- o find an alternative subject word
- o use sub-topics
- o use cross references
- o find entries for illustrations
- o recognize that extended references will have the most information on the topic
- o locate information in the text by scanning for subject words on referenced pages

Contents

Questions which require students to:

- o predict useful chapter headings when given subject words not contained in the heading
- o locate the glossary, tables, bibliography, etc.
- o locate chapter
- o skim chapter for headings, sub-headings, illustrations, summaries, etc.

Note:

Other parts of the book can be similarly dealt with. The number and complexity of the questions depends on whether the intention is for reinforcement or initial introductions.

Readability

1. Rule of thumb:

   (a) Select the reading material.

   (b) A passage of 100 words is chosen from any part of the book.

   (c) Read the passage silently.

   (d) Hold up a finger every time an unknown word is encountered.

   (e) If four fingers and the thumb are held up before the end of the passage it may be that the book will be too hard for easy reading.

APPLICATION OF READING SKILLS

SURVEY THE INFORMATION

Selected chapters, passages and articles are surveyed for overall organization of the material and to identify specific information relevant to the topic.

TO SURVEY THE INFORMATION STUDENTS NEED TO:

- *recognize that printed materials have a logical structure:*
  - *introduction*
  - *conclusion*
  - *a main idea in each paragraph - sometimes using a topic sentence.*
- *identify typographical and pictorial clues:*
  - *main and sub-headings printed separately*
  - *different print, e.g. bold, italics, underlining*
  - *pictures, diagrams, etc.*

STRATEGIES

SURVEY THE INFORMATION

Prediction based on surveying information

1. (a) Before research students are given a copy of the same text/articles.

   (b) Students predict usefulness of material based on examination of headings, sub-headings, pictures, diagrams, introduction and conclusion.

2. (a) Collect a range of text materials on the student's research topic.

   (b) Students complete short survey sheet which requires them to predict the usefulness of the resource.

   (c) Students who reject the resource may take another from the range and repeat the process.

Typographical and pictorial clues

1. (a) Select an appropriate number of different articles which use typographical clues in different ways, e.g. bold type, italics, sub-headings.

   (b) Divide the class into small groups.

   (c) Each group considers an article, identifying the types of typographical clues and their relevance to the information presented in the text.

   (d) Class discussion on the types of typographical clues found and how they were used.

Introductions and conclusions

1. (a) Provide all students with an example of a well-developed text chapter or article.

   (b) Discuss the function of the introduction, i.e. to give readers an idea of the opinion of the author and to survey the range of main points the author wishes to make in the text.

   (c) Students individually underline/highlight the main points in the introductory paragraph(s).

   (d) Class discussion of main points.

   (e) Students then locate the main points in the body of the text.

Introductions and conclusions (continued)

2. (a) Provide students with example of a badly-written and a well-written article.

   (b) Students identify the main points in the introduction and body of the text.

   (c) Discuss whether there are similarities/differences in the structure of both articles.

3. (a) Provide students with a well-written extract which has the introduction deleted.

   (b) Students identify the main ideas and write their own introduction.

4. Three paragraphs, one which is an introduction, are given to students. Students identify the paragraph which is an introduction and justify this choice.

5. Activities for the introduction can be modified and used for the conclusion.

READING IN DETAIL

TO READ IN DETAIL STUDENTS NEED TO:

- *identify the main idea in a paragraph.*
- *recognize supporting details of the main idea.*
- *appreciate the flow of language to signify points - e.g. 'one', "another', 'then', 'first', 'secondly'.*
- *use context clues to determine the meaning of words.*
- *determine if the information is biased.*
- *differentiate between fact and opinion.*
- *actively question as they read - e.g. what? where? who? when? how? why?*

STRATEGIES

READING IN DETAIL

Main idea and supporting details

1. Students are given a paragraph and asked to:

   (a) Write the main idea in a word or phrase.

   (b) List key supporting details. These will include examples, explanations, facts and other keywords.

2. Students are given a paragraph which has a topic sentence and asked to circle the main idea and underline keywords that support this idea.

Language to signify points

1. Prepare a multiple choice of paragraphs and main ideas with supporting details and students match these.

2. (a) A brief extract is given to students which uses the flow of language to signify points.

   (b) Students circle words which indicate that a point will follow, e.g. 'one', 'another'.

   (c) List main ideas and supporting points.

3. (a) Students are given a main idea with supporting points.

   (b) Using this as a basis, students write a paragraph with language to signify points.

   (c) Students swap paragraphs with a partner and:

   - underline words from the paragraph which indicated points to follow
   - write main idea
   - list supporting points

   (d) Compare to original.

Context clues

1. Students are given a paragraph with a word underlined. Students use other words around this word, or a picture that goes with it, to predict what this word means.

Bias

1. Students are given a selection of extracts on the same topic, indicating different perspectives. The teacher supplies focus questions to assist in determining the perspective of each source.

2. (a) Students are given an extract or article on a controversial issue.

   (b) Students determine:

   - What the issue is.
   - Are all points of view presented?
   - If not, what extra information is required?
   - How can it be obtained? etc.

Fact and opinion

1. (a) Prepare a list of statements, some of which are facts and some opinions.

   (b) Individually students decide which are fact and which are opinion.

   (c) In groups students justify their decisions.

2. Students are given an advertisement and they make a list of the 'facts' and a separate list of the 'opinions'. The length of each list is compared.

3. Provide students with a brief article in which they underline the words that are opinions and circle the facts.

Questioning while reading

1. Using an article or extract or newspaper report, students develop an overview by answering the following:

   - What the issue is.
   - Who is involved.
   - Where is it happening?
   - When is it happening?
   - How is it happening?
   - Why is it happening? (Often leads to further research).

   This approach is particularly useful for current affairs.

2. (a) Students are given an extract or article on a controversial issue.

   (b) Students determine

   - What the issue is.
   - Are all points of view presented?
   - If not, what extra information is required?
   - How can it be obtained? etc.